

The Jury

I consider trial by jury as the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution. *Thomas Jefferson, drafter of the Declaration of Independence and third President of the United States*

The purpose of a jury is to guard against the exercise of arbitrary power--to make available the common sense judgment of the community as a hedge against the overzealous or mistaken prosecutor and in preference to the professional or perhaps over-conditioned or biased response of a judge. *U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron White*

Illegal and unconstitutional jury selection procedures cast doubt on the integrity of the whole judicial process. They create the appearance of bias in the decision of individual cases, and they increase the risk of actual bias as well. *U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall*

Jury trial, as an instrument of justice, as an educator of the people, and as a means of making them feel their responsibility in government, is by far the best system of trial yet devised. *Michigan Supreme Court Justice Thomas M. Cooley (one of the "Big Four" Justices who presided on the Court in the 19th Century)*

Jury: A group of 12 people who, having lied to the judge about their health, hearing, and business engagements, have failed to fool him. *H.L. Mencken, American journalist and social critic*

I'm no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system -- that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality. Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. *Harper Lee, novelist, in To Kill A Mockingbird*

The friends and adversaries of the plan of the [Constitutional] convention, if they agree on nothing else, concur at least in the value they set upon the trial by jury; or if there is any difference between them it consists of this: the former regard it as a valuable safeguard to liberty, the latter represent it as the very palladium of free government. *Alexander Hamilton, joint author of The Federalist Papers*

The founders considered the right of trial by jury in civil cases an important bulwark against tyranny and corruption, a safeguard too precious to be left to the whim of the sovereign. Juries represent laymen's common sense and keep the administration of law in accord with the feelings of the community. *William H. Renquist, current Chief Justice, U.S. Supreme Court*

[Jury service] rubs off that private selfishness which is the rust of society. *Alexis de Tocqueville, French statesman and observer of American society*

The jury system has come to stand for all we mean by English justice. The scrutiny of 12 honest jurors provides defendants and plaintiffs alike a safeguard from arbitrary perversion of the law. *Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain*